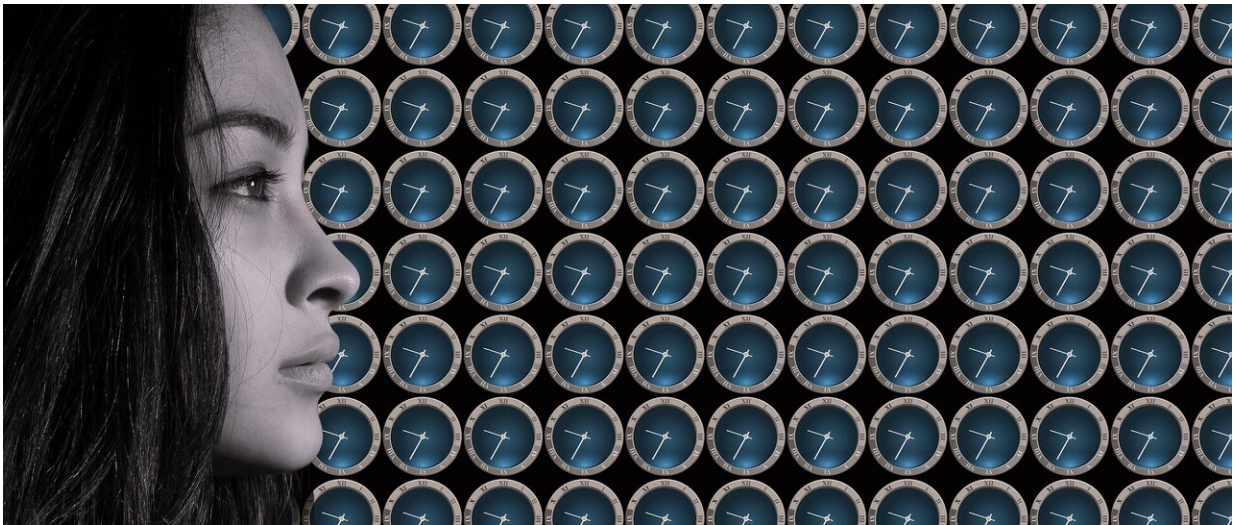


# Uterine fibroids can take a heavy emotional toll on women, study shows

December 9 2020, by Marisol Martinez

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In a comprehensive review of 57 research studies looking at the quality of life of women with uterine fibroids compared with that of people with other chronic diseases, Johns Hopkins Medicine researchers found that the psychological and social burden of the condition is comparable with those for heart disease, diabetes or breast cancer.

The findings, published in the Nov. 1, 2020, issue of the *American Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology*, suggest that fibroids affect a woman's quality of life both physically and emotionally. Furthermore,

the condition may become a disability in terms of bodily pain, [mental health](#), social functioning and satisfaction with sex life.

Uterine fibroids are the most prevalent benign gynecologic tumors, affecting up to 80% of [women](#) of reproductive age. They are made of smooth muscle cells and fibrous connective tissue, and their cause is unknown. One in four women with fibroids may experience heavy menstrual bleeding, anemia, abdominal pain or pressure, increased urinary frequency, and infertility or recurrent miscarriages.

"Over half of the women in the United States will have fibroids, so their overall impact is substantial and yet, this fact does not receive enough attention," says James Segars Jr., M.D., director of the Division of Reproductive Science and Women's Health Research, and professor of gynecology and obstetrics at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine.

Women with fibroids, the study states, may experience debilitating feelings of worry, fear, anxiety, insecurity and helplessness, as well as issues with self-image and depression. Moreover, the findings show that lack of control over the condition is a leading cause of distress.

"For some women, the unpredictability and intensity of the heavy bleeding and related symptoms associated with the condition go beyond an inconvenience," says Segars. "Many women suffer in silence, and feel they can't go out or be social because they may start bleeding at any time."

Treatment for [uterine fibroids](#) depends on the condition's severity. Medication may be used to help shrink the size of the fibroids or they may be surgically removed. With fibroids resulting in approximately 600,000 hysterectomies per year, the tumors are the second most common reason for surgery among pre-menopausal women.

**More information:** Virginia Arlene A. Go et al. A systematic review of the psychosocial impact of fibroids before and after treatment, *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* (2020). [DOI: 10.1016/j.ajog.2020.05.044](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajog.2020.05.044)

Provided by Johns Hopkins University

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